

for U.S. farm exports. Labeling protections have been established in Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. The Cartagena Biosafety Protocol drafted early this year allows nations to refuse imports of GE organisms.

OTHER IMPACTS OF GE FOODS DESERVING ATTENTION

The gene revolution is being led by the agribusiness industry. These are a handful of multinational companies which own much of the world's supplies of seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, food and animal veterinary products. The result of numerous acquisitions and mergers, the agri-business conglomeration has spent millions of dollars on research and development of GE products. Given such heavy investment, it should come as no surprise that its primary goal is to recover its expenses and turn a profit.

It is to profit-seeking companies, therefore, that we are ceding the right to re-engineer the earth—our plants, our food, our fish, our animals, our trees, even our lawns. Genetic engineering in

Marketed by agrichemical companies, genetic engineering in agriculture promises to perpetuate the present industrialized system of agriculture—a system characterized by large farms, single cropping, heavy machinery and dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Such a system has consolidated acres into fewer and larger farms, marginalizing small farmers and reducing the number of people living on farms and in rural communities.

With a goal of marketing GE seeds worldwide, genetic engineering will continue the trend of industrialized farming to reduce crop diversity, making our food supply increasingly vulnerable to pests and disease. The Southern Corn Leaf Blight which in 1970 destroyed 60 percent of the U.S. corn crop in one summer, clearly demonstrates that a genetically uniform crop base is a disaster waiting to happen. The linkages of genetically engineered seeds and pesticides, such as Monsanto's GE Roundup Ready Seeds will ensure continued use of agricultural chemicals.

Genetic engineering is likely to further diminish the role of the farmer. GE seeds are designed to be grown in a large scale agricultural system in which farmers become laborers or "renters" of seed technology. Desperate to increase their yields to make up for low prices, many U.S. farmers have adopted the "high-yielding" GE seeds. In doing so, they have been forced to sign contracts legally binding them to use proprietary chemicals on their transgenic crops and in some cases to permit random inspections of their fields by biotechnology company representatives who check that farmers are not saving and reusing the licensed seed. Despite the premium farmers pay for high tech seeds, they receive no warranty for the performance of these seeds as the contracts protect biotechnology seed companies in the event of seed failures.

A PROTECTIVE REGULATORY STRUCTURE

Despite the uncertainties associated with genetic engineering, nevertheless, GE crops covered 71 million acres of U.S. farmland last year, and GE ingredients are present throughout the food supply. Ranging from ice-cream

and infant formula to tortilla chips and veggie burgers, foods produced using genetic engineering line our supermarket shelves. These foods are unlabeled and have not been appropriately assessed for safety. Consumers, therefore, are unwitting subjects in a massive experiment with their food.

Our regulatory system has clearly failed to ensure the protection of human health, the environment and farmers. In response I have authored legislation in the 106th Congress that would fill the regulatory vacuum.

To ensure food safety, I have introduced a bill that requires that GE food go through the FDA's current food additive process, acknowledging that a food is fundamentally altered when a new gene is inserted into it. The review process would look at concerns unique to GE products including allergenicity, unintended effects, toxicity, functional characteristics and nutrient levels.

To date, the public has been largely left out of the biotechnology regulatory process, and that needs to change. Consequently, I propose that the FDA conduct a public comment period of at least 30 days once a completed safety application is available to the public. All studies performed by the applicant must be made available including all data unfavorable to the petition. The FDA should also maintain a publicly available registry of the GE foods for which food additives are pending or have been approved.

When the FDA was called upon to confirm the Taco Bell taco shell contamination for a possible regulatory enforcement action, it was unable to do so because it lacked the necessary testing protocols. The FDA should correct this failure by immediately creating testing protocols for all GE foods and test for potential contamination in these foods. Until then, the FDA cannot determine the ingredients in our food supply, it is unlikely that the FDA can ensure the American public that other foods are not contaminated.

I have also introduced a bill requiring mandatory labeling of GE foods or foods containing GE ingredients so that American consumers can make informed choices about what they are eating. Packaged foods carry nutritional labels, drugs and medications come with descriptions of their contents. There is no reason that GE food should not also be labeled granting consumers their fundamental right to know what is in their food.

Clearly, environmental regulations for the release of the GE organisms need to be strengthened. Similarly, the USDA allows field trials of all GE plants that prevent adequate assessments of the environment risks posed by these plants. Though genetically engineered fish are predicted to be commercialized by 2001, it is still unclear which agency will regulate them. The US Fish and Wild Life Service as well as the National Marine and Fish Service must pay a role in developing regulations for GE fish.

Finally, Congress should hold hearings on the failure of the regulatory agencies in protecting the American public.

CONCLUSION

The controversy surrounding genetically engineered food should not be a surprise to any-

one. The mechanical manipulation of genes in the food one eats instinctively raises questions of health and safety. We instinctively trust farmers to grow and raise our food, but we must question the motivation of large corporations who want to create impure food for pure profit. When we feed our family, we don't take chances. If we are not sure how old the leftovers in the back of the fridge are, we throw them out. And as long as we are not convinced that this new technology is flawless, people should be hesitant to serve genetically engineered food to their children. New technologies always have unforeseen effects. The American consumer does not want to be a part of an experiment at their dinner table.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 140TH ANNIVERSARY OF LAKESHORE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 2, 2000

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I wish to celebrate the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland, California. This milestone will be commemorated on Sunday, November 12, 2000.

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church was founded in 1860 in Oakland, California, and is a member of the American Baptist Churches. This congregation first began as the First Baptist Church of Brooklyn, California, a community that was near Lake Merritt but is now a part of the City of Oakland, California. Once Brooklyn became a part of Oakland, the name of the church changed to the Tenth Avenue Baptist Church. Since that time, the church's structure was destroyed twice by fire, first in 1945 and again in 1955, but through the faith and dedication of the congregation, the present structure was built and dedicated in 1957 as the Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church.

Lakeshore is one of our most diverse congregations in our community with a membership of 55% African American, 40% Caucasian and 5% Asian Americans.

Lakeshore contributes to the community in many ways. For sixty years, they have sponsored one of the oldest weekday religious radio programs. Lakeshore also worked to integrate the neighborhood surrounding the church, founded the Lakeshore Children's Center (now the Children's Peace Academy), established a Hunger Task Force which supports hunger relief programs in the Bay Area, assisted immigrants and refugees in settling in Oakland, and co-founded the Oakland Coalition of Congregations.

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church is a great source of civic pride and a valuable resource for the community, I proudly join the church's members, friends and neighbors in saluting and honoring the history and spirit of this landmark church.